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Clifford Brown/ Sonny Rollins/ Max Roach Quintet Complete Studio Recordings

Publisher: **Essential Jazz Classics**

This collection contains just two albums, originally issued as *Clifford Brown and Max Roach at Basin Street* and *Sonny Rollins Plus Four*. The decision to label these two as **Clifford Brown/ Sonny Rollins/ Max Roach Quintet: Complete Studio Recordings** is indicative of the fact that Brown died in a car crash just a few months after these recordings were made. Collecting the complete works of Rollins or Roach would include stacks of records, but Brown's legacy (along with pianist Richie Powell featured here) sadly ended at the young age of 26. The **Clifford Brown/ Sonny Rollins/ Max Roach Quintet** is special not just because of the short legacy of Brown, but because it captured three great artists at a transitional time in jazz history.



Each man in this band had cut his teeth on bebop and blues, but the group's soul compositions marks a change in style from bebop to so-called cool jazz and has come across in more fluid melodic lines that float above chord progressions in a collaboration beyond the typical "head-in...solos...head-out" format. Powell takes a different approach on the keyboard, but his creativity shines in compositions like "Time," a piano background reminiscent of Monk, and the spirited "Gertrude's Bounce." Two young players, Tadd Dameron and Clifford Brown, show that these still young players were rooted in the smooth, swinging style of the big bands that were gasping their last breath in the late '50s. *Sonny Rollins Plus Four* is predictably more of a vehicle for Rollins, with two of his original songs that mark an addition to the jazz canon, "Valse Hot" and "Pent-Up House." Brown rips into every note with gusto and certainty that one would expect in a much more mature player. His love for long bursts of notes, with long lines that threaded through the changes and arpeggiated patterns make Powell's comping almost irrelevant, shows how much he was straddling the line between older styles and what was coming. Roach rumbles in the background but lets the trumpet take most of the glory. Rollins puts in several good solos but acts very much like a sideman during the Basin Street recordings.

Apart from hearing almost 80 minutes of wonderful soloing from legends like Clifford Brown, the group's interplay on **Clifford Brown/ Sonny Rollins/ Max Roach Quintet: Complete Studio Recordings** seems almost telepathic at times. For the most part, the quick motifs (that were only an excuse to get to the solos, anyway) have been replaced by elaborate melodies and arrangements that showcase each instrument. There's a certain spirit; one can almost hear during some of these solos the joy of release after a long chord. Bringing more structure to the small group setting was a hallmark of '50s jazz. **Clifford Brown/ Sonny Rollins/ Max Roach Quintet: Complete Studio Recordings** showcases musicians that almost always found that perfect balance between heart and intellect in their music.



-Fridtjof, GameVortex Communications AKA M

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Clifford Brown and Max Roach at Basin Street on AllMusic
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